

CSDR Students and Graduates

*Where They Came From and
Where They Went From Here*



Mission:

Students at California School for the Deaf are engaged in a positive environment where ASL and English are valued, cultures are embraced, learning is relevant, and self-worth is uplifted. In collaboration with families and school communities, Southern California students prepare for college and careers through academic rigor, innovative technology and extra-curricular opportunities.





Hailey Burton

Moreno Valley Unified
School District

Reflections of a Newcomer

When I first started 9th grade at a public high school, I thought it would be no different than what I had grown used to at my middle school. It was “just that.” I sat alone at lunch near my next class, read books, and did homework, and I shut out the world around me; I was different and I didn’t fit in with my classmates. I had big plans for my future, and still do, and everyone around me just didn’t care. I rode my bike two miles every day to school, and came home, nothing more. It was the same thing every day, and I knew I could’ve been doing something different rather than watching the hours pass by. And then I came to CSDR, and I realized that everyone I’d somewhat known since I was nine years old, when I met them the summer of ‘09 at the Wrightwood Lions Camp for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, was here. Every summer since that first year was spent wondering about them, who they were, and I wanted nothing more than to go back to camp. First I thought it

was just the way a perfect summer felt, but when I saw them outside of camp, at CSDR, in every single one of my classes, I knew. There’s no language barrier anymore, and there’s nothing holding me back from really connecting with them. Camp was only a week long. Now I’ll spend three more years with them, and, if I’m lucky, more time than that. I’m where I should’ve been all this time, and now my brothers will be spared the isolation of where we were before. For that, I’m grateful. We’re happy here.

This is where we’re meant to be. Cole, my twelve year old brother is doing better in school, and he’s happier too, though he doesn’t admit it. He’s not bullied anymore, and we’re not arguing at home at much as we used to. Logan never fails to surprise me; every day I notice something about him that’s different—the way he tucks his shirt in, he’s never done that before CSDR, and his facial expressions, like how he crinkles his nose and raises his eyebrow and tilts his head when he’s confused, that’s new too.

***“In the end,
it’s not the
years in
your life
that count.
It’s the life
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years.”***

***-Abraham
Lincoln***



Hailey with CSDR classmate and friend Courtney

Me? I’m happy. I smile. I laugh. I’m social. My friends know my deepest, darkest secrets and fears, I trust them, and I actually want to go to school for other reasons besides learning. When I’m walking past the Bummy Student Center every morning to my first period, and I see my friends all standing there, laughing and talking, I smile to myself, sometimes I don’t realize it. Sometimes I try to hide it. I still find it hard to believe that I’d be here, with them. There’s always something new, another story I have to tell my kids and grandkids and whoever else I meet later in life. Only now, I’m not outside looking in anymore— I’m part of the stories and the people, and they’re a part of me. When my friends here gave me a nickname, I was over the moon, because I knew it meant something I never thought I’d find again for a long, long time. I’m glad I was wrong. There are times when I’d just look up in class, at everyone in the room, and I’d let it all sink in. I’d think about where I was before, and where I am now. Nothing compares to that feeling I get every time. This place is my safe haven, in every single way, no matter how small or seemingly irrelevant.

When asked to explain my favorite part of this year, honestly? I can’t tell you that. I don’t know how to, in a way that you’d really, truly understand. It’s indescribable. To me, it feels unfair to name just one thing, when every day takes my breath away. But if I had to, I’d say February 9th, 2015. If

you ask me again ten years from now, my answer would be the same. If my next three years at California School for the Deaf are the same if not better than the three months I’ve spent here now, then it is guaranteed these will be a few of the best years of my life. It’s only the beginning. February 9th was my very first day here. It was unplanned, I thought I was only supposed to come for a meeting, but then I’m sitting in a desk in my third period Biology, with famil-

iar faces that would soon become like family. I do wish I could’ve been better at signing, but that I cannot help since this is my first Deaf school, and to improve is my goal for next year as well as having twice the adventures and participating in sports and other extracurricular activities. I want to live life to the fullest, because these are years I am never getting back. As Abraham Lincoln once said, “In the end, it’s not the years in your life that count. It’s the life in your years.”



Raymart Tinio

Cabrillo Unified School District

Earned his wings at Purdue University, joining past CSDR pilots

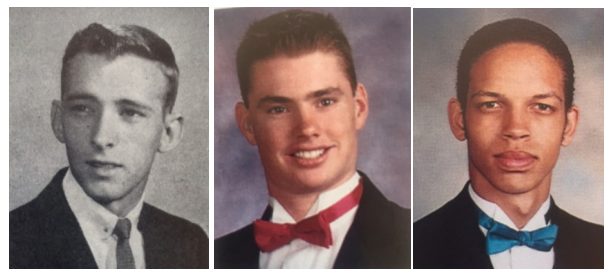
I went to CSDR for my high school years. I wanted to have full/direct communication with the teachers, staff, and friends. It was hard at first [being away from home] ... but I had to sacrifice in order to achieve my goal. CSDR taught me to fight for my future.

CSDR graduate Raymart Tinio earned his pilot's license from Purdue University through the AbleFlight scholarship, making him the 4th alumnus of CSDR to become a pilot. The idea of becoming a pilot first occurred to Tinio while a junior at CSDR with the help of his career preparation teacher, Mr. Mitch Kurs. He has since then been sharing his aviation goals with his other teachers. "CSDR taught me to fight for my future," Raymart recalls. "I was all grins when I first flew a plane with my trainer, thinking 'Finally, after all these years!'" Only a handful of Deaf pilots exist in the world and Raymart has demonstrated proof that Deaf individuals can earn their wings. One must have a solid foundation of language, mathematics, science and physics in order to become a pilot. Tinio is currently a student at San Jose State University majoring in Aviation Management, in addition to his desire to be a professional pilot.



Tinio '11 flies solo over Purdue University

It's possible to be deaf and fly planes. Hearing and speaking are not required for the vast majority of American airspace, thus deaf pilots do not communicate directly with towers. However, Tinio, who has partial hearing with a hearing aid, likes using the radio to listen for any engine trouble or for the blaring of horns if his plane is too close to a stall. Regan, who speaks well, prefers to announce his position on the radio. The majority of deaf pilots do not wear headsets and rely on their natural strength—their eyes.



Don McCary '62 Garrett Regan '91 Kevin Willis '97
Deaf aviation pilots back when they were a senior at CSDR

The other three notable CSDR alumni pilots starting with the more recent graduates are Kevin Willis ('97), Garrett 'Rusty' Regan ('91), and Don Allen McCary ('62). Willis and Regan are both working at FlyCorona Flight School in Corona, CA. Willis is a certificated aviation ground school instructor. He will complete his Associates of Science of Commercial Flight degree this semester from Mt. San Antonio College. Regan is a certificated as both a flight instructor and an aircraft mechanic. Veteran pilot McCary, on the other hand, is retired and enjoying the rich memories of flying and skydiving that he has done over the years.



(Left to right) McCary '62 ready for a nice flight in Southern California; Regan '91 (front) and Willis '97 (back) fly the Piper J3 Cub over Mt. Rubidoux



Karina Baker

Culver City Unified School District

**Daughter of an oral deaf father
who later learned ASL**

"My dad remembers always trying to figure out everything, feeling left out, and he did not want the same for me."

since an early age. She first enrolled at Tripod in Burbank, a deaf program from Kindergarten through first grade. "It served as my foundation for ASL, which would not have happened if I were in a hearing program at first," Karina explained. Until the 9th grade she was always mainstreamed. At the elementary level she had hearing friends, which was possible because the school was small. There she was popular among her peers and happy for a while. Other students were motivated to learn sign language and communicate with her. However, she was sometimes left out during interactions that involved more than two people. Overall, her experience was wonderful, but fleeting.

When she entered middle school, the student population was larger, which made interaction tough for her. Some friends entered into cliques. "I felt alone. Students had to work harder with gestures to communicate with me. Most students did not bother to learn sign language," Karina shared. She had friends who could fingerspell well enough to communicate, but they did not sign fluently. "I was somewhat happy, but still felt left out, especially at times when others joined in the group with my friends. These friends would interact through voice only and I could not be a part of it."

Karina mostly signed with her family members. Her deaf parents were the only deaf members of their families, thus Karina had hearing grandparents. Her grandmother in particular was supportive, patient, and never

Karina has attended and excelled in almost every type of school setting for the Deaf: a small deaf program, full-time mainstreaming, and a school for the Deaf. Karina did well academically as a freshman at a large public high school, using a sign language interpreter. She transferred to the California School for the Deaf in Riverside for the rest of her high school years to pursue personal, academic, and social growth. At CSDR Karina competed on the national Deaf Academic Bowl and was selected as an all-star player in the Western Regional. In school sports she participates in volleyball, softball, cheerleading, and wrestling. She is enrolled in Honors and AP classes and excels in the school-wide Math Olympiad that CSDR hosts every spring. She is also active in the Jr. National Association of the Deaf as vice president, and just attended the Youth Leadership Camp for deaf students last summer.

Karina was born deaf to a deaf father who himself was raised in an oral program and later used ASL as an adult. Her mother is not in the picture and her father has raised Karina

got frustrated with her. She was able to deal with her temper, which is typical among deaf children if communication is a struggle. “When I was young, I felt nobody understood me (who had rapid and urgent vocal expressions). I would throw tantrums, but Grandma rarely got mad at me.” Her grandparents worked hard in learning sign language for their granddaughter. Even though their son (Karina’s father) was deaf, he was oral enough to communicate through speech only. Now with Karina, the parents finally learned ASL a generation later. It was worthwhile for Karina’s grandmother because she and Karina developed a close relationship for a good, precious while, before she passed away with cancer when Karina was in the fourth grade.

“I really miss Grandma; she was the one who taught me to talk.” Karina described how they would pretend to talk to each other on the phone. Once, she went to a friend’s house across the street and phoned her Grandma to say hello. She heard her Grandma’s response, ‘Hello, Karina’, with her hearing aids. “I was so thrilled that I ran back home to hug Grandma!” Karina also went to a speech program in Los Angeles County. The director advised her to wear her hearing aids for speech therapy, but she disliked the prolonged use of her aids, and stopped using speech. “I hated my hearing aids. They did not feel natural and were in fact very annoying. I have long accepted that I am who I am. The hearing aids did not help. I learned to rely on my eyes.”

After experiencing limited access to communication in the public classroom, Karina eventually got fed up with mainstreaming, wanting full access at a school for the Deaf. When her family first requested a transfer to CSDR, her school district resisted even after many meetings throughout the summer and early Fall. “I was upset that it had been so hard for me,” Karina protested. The battle had deeply affected her because she did not win the transfer until two months after the school year had begun. She came as a freshman, and found that students had already bonded with each other for the beginning of their high

school experience. Having missed the deadlines for tryouts and applications, she also was not able to participate in any organizations that year, such as volleyball, the formation of the school song troupe, and Associated Student Body Government. The academic demand was pressing, too. “I was behind in homework for that quarter, having to catch up a whole lot,” Karina explained in frustration.

Starting as a new student mid-semester at CSDR was awkward at first for Karina who, like many newcomers, required time to adjust. She was used to the hearing school system, so she experienced culture shock at this new school for deaf students. The class size was smaller for one thing. However, she held steadfast to why she

wanted to come here in the first place: she could finally be herself with direct communication.

In a flamingly rapid string of statements, Karina emphasized, “I am naturally a very straightforward person. I can be blunt and I hate to be restricted to the interpreter for sending my verbal expressions. Sometimes I like to speak up to the teacher directly, but the interpreter would screen out or modify my words or tone, so I could not really be myself. Here, at CSDR, I can finally start a life where I could communicate with everybody.” At school, Karina has many close friends, including a best friend who is

deaf and very similar to her in personality and life goals. She is still taking time to acclimate to the variety of different personalities on campus. She no longer needs to befriend just a few deaf friends, but has a whole range of options in friendships. After a few months, Karina felt that she could fit in and she believes that it definitely is a lot easier to do that at the school for the deaf, as compared to at a public school.

Karina thanks her dad for his support, for always asking her questions, and for fighting so hard to help her enroll at this school. “My dad remembers always trying to figure out everything, feeling left out, and he did not want the





At CSDR, I could finally start a life where I could communicate with everybody.

same for me.” Karina’s father described, through a personal interview, how Karina expresses herself easily and rapidly, with a sharp mind, always thinking quickly. “She is definitely not like me.” The father remembers how he used to read to his daughter every night during bedtime, signing aloud all the stories. At age five, Karina insisted upon reading the books herself. The father credits Karina’s cognitive growth to reading in ASL at such an early age. The father added that Karina has had a difficult route in her life, not being with her mother and losing her grandmother and uncle. But through this all, she still does her very best. “If not for my dad, I would have been alone,” Karina said.

A graduate of CSDR, Karina is attending the Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, New York. She had enjoyed English and looked up to her CSDR high school AP English teacher, Gloria Daniels, who is hearing with deaf parents. Ms. Daniels knew how to handle such an intelligent and articulate student, and to teach to her highest potential. Among Karina’s dreams after college are to study for her master’s degree elsewhere with specialization in English and Special Education.

Karina concluded, “I want to travel and establish schools for deaf children world-wide, so they can get equal opportunities as I did.”



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Reagan Anders

Tustin Unified School District

Gives back to CSDR as a world Gold medalist and P.E. teacher



It is my turn to do what the teachers and dorm counselors have done for me.

CSDR PE Teacher and former student Reagan Anders brought back her fourth Gold medal from Turkey in 2012. As team captain for the United States women Deaf soccer team, Anders and her team beat Russia in the World Cup championship, 1-0. Anders also succeeds in several competitions, including the world “Deaflympics” and the annual Marie Jean Phillips ASL storytelling contests. Anders was featured in the international Deaf Life Magazine as “Deaf Person of the Month” for September 2012. “Reagan is an example to us all”, the CSDR Superintendent once said. Students in her classes are inspired and strive to meet her high expectations.

It was at CSDR during 1995 to 1999 when Anders first embraced her deaf identity and language, a big part of who she is. Anders, however, admits that she originally never wanted to work at a “highlighted” big deaf school where great staff and resources are already in plenty, like at CSD-Riverside. Anders eventually realized that CSDR is different, and she has taught here for nine years now.

“I like the challenge of teaching at this school. I have a big heart and see that these kids need great, deaf role models at school. For 90% of the students, they are the only deaf person in their families, just as I am. I feel very connected with them.

Moreover, a few teachers and dorm counselors, who taught me when I was a student, are still at this school, and we now are co-workers. It is my turn to do what they have done for me.” Reagan Anders had been looking for a way to encourage her deaf students to compete along with hearing children their own age outside the school. She found it with the Mt. SAC Cross Country Invitational Run. Under her coordination, CSDR third- through middle school-grade students attended the cross country invitational track and field race annually.

Anders expressed positive sentiments about the staff members she works with, and her students, who are brilliant, safe, and healthy, with such beautiful signing. “I am excited being a part of this team, and bring in more fun and creativity for the P.E. program.”



Left: Reagan Anders (blue uniform) playing as captain on the USA team for World Cup Finals in Turkey ; Right: Anders leads the Deaf USA team to victorious Gold at the World Cup in Turkey

Photos: SportsMX

Dominique Yeboah

*Chaffey Joint Union High School
District*

Rediscovered language as a teenager

Out of 180 high school deaf students at California School for the Deaf in Riverside, Dominique received the award as this year's top student in the Career Technology Education program. The principal explained onstage to the entire school of 425 students that in all the courses Dominique took, she excelled with high grades during her four years at CSDR. These courses included Computer Applications, Digital Imaging, Television and Film Production, Career Preparation, Leadership, Yearbook, Health, and Work Experience. Dominique has a positive attitude in learning, is attentive to her teachers and is kind to her peers.

Dominique's Valedictorian Address:

"At nearly 18 years of age, my life experiences are uniquely different than most of my friends and peers of the same age. I was born hearing, with my twin sister, on the twenty-seventh day of May in Liberia, West Africa. As my first language during childhood I spoke English, which was one of the official languages in Liberia, while my parents spoke both English and Bassa. At eight years old I became ill with meningitis, which made me deaf. I remained in the hospital, recovering from meningitis, for two long and excruciating years. Not knowing that sign language existed, my family had me attend a public school in Liberia. Consequently, I could not hear what the instructors were teaching or what other classmates were saying. Years passed where I did not know what went on inside classrooms, all because there was not any known communication for me.

My parents knew that I deserved a better education elsewhere, outside of Africa, and had saved money for our move to help give me a better life. In May of 2006, my aunt, who was already living in America, acquired guardianship of my

With her hearing twin sister, Dominique (left) fled her homeland in Liberia for a better life here.



twin sister and me. We travelled to southern California to live with my aunt, intending to gain a better education. We enrolled into the 5th grade at a local public school. During 5th and 6th grades I continued to fight to understand, since there were no interpreters and I did not know any sign language. I felt I did not belong where I was and I felt lost. Then my middle school counselor finally mentioned to my aunt about the School for the Deaf located in Riverside.

When my family and I first visited the CSDR campus, I remember catching my first glimpse of American Sign Language and feeling captivated with amazement and disbelief. I took ASL classes at CSDR when I enrolled into CSDR's middle school. Soon after, my feelings of insecurity, confusion, and exclusion dissipated. Finally, I could communicate with others, understand my teachers, and serve in student activities.

“My feelings of insecurity, confusion, and exclusion dissipated. Finally, I could communicate with others.”

Within a few short years of being exposed to and educated in ASL, I felt confident and ASL seemed to be a natural part of my life. I had not accepted my Deaf identity until I came here to CSDR. Here I finally fit in.

ASL is now my most comfortable, native language, while I also still speak English, using voice and writing. I do wish that my family could also learn ASL so I could feel free to communicate with them about what is happening at school and in my life. Only my twin sister and I have a unique, uncanny ability to understand each other through speech and signs, in a way that only twins can do. With the school's cultural and educational approach with bilingualism, I have become proud and ultimately happier.

I have graduated from CSDR with honors as Valedictorian, and I have been accepted to Gallaudet University in Washington D.C. You see, I was just a black deaf woman from a faraway country without education, fighting for a better life, and to this day, I made it to the next chapter of my life but not without my opinion, my voice, my family, my teachers, the staff, and California School for the Deaf, Riverside.”



Lorenzo Heredia Jr.

Los Angeles Unified School District

Works as at Dodger Stadium

I enjoyed learning in English class; I was always early and ready at the beginning of class every day.

not able to stay at CSDR during the last two years of high school, returning to Los Angeles for family reasons.

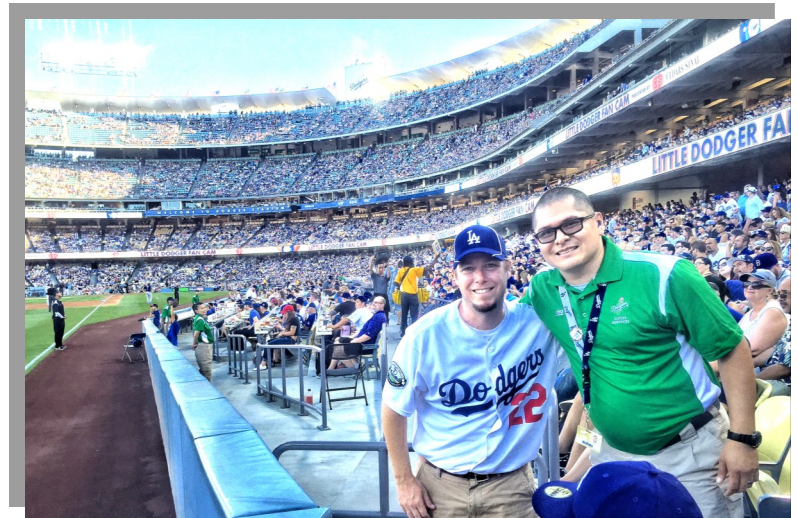
After Heredia received his high school certificate, he attended El Camino College for some classes to continue his learning. Refusing to give up, he was determined to get a good job.

When Lorenzo Heredia Jr. was a student at CSDR, he became a Dodgers fan thanks to the inspiration of his English teacher, Mr. Niel Thompson. Now as a grown man, Heredia gets paid to watch every single home game on the first level at Dodger Stadium. This former student works as an usher, greeting baseball fans and guiding them to their seats or giving them directions to restrooms or other parts of the stadium. He also watches for any breaches of security.

Passersby speak into Heredia's ears that are fitted with hearing aids, and he responds using spoken English and pointing gestures. He also has a deaf co-worker who ushers a different section near him, which fulfills his need for full rapport in his first language of ASL. "This job is comfortable and enjoyable. I have fun chatting with people," says Heredia, who adds that he has always liked socializing.

His best memories of CSDR were both the after school student life program and his teachers in his classes. He enjoyed the organized activities and recreation, held after school and in the evenings at the student dorms. During the afternoon hours, he also played football, basketball, and baseball with weekly team practices. These were the times when he remembers having good friends and being treated equally by his coaches and peers. Heredia also appreciated his academic courses, especially English with Mr. Thompson who also bled "Dodger blue." Growing up with limited access to language before entering middle school at CSDR, he became immersed in an environment rich in language and learning. In high school, Mr. Thompson helped him acquire a better vocabulary and improve his English grammar, and got him to read avidly by introducing him to the Sports page in the daily newspaper after he completed his class requirement for the day. "I have not let go of the Sports page ever since," laughed Heredia. "I enjoyed learning in his class; he was like a dad to me. I was always early and ready at the beginning of class every day." Heredia was

Heredia feels lucky to be working at Dodger Stadium. For the past three years, he had been operating the Tickets Star Cup window at Staples Center, home of the Kings, Lakers, Sparks, Clippers, Avengers and other events. Finally in March 2015, his excellent work ethics at Staples Center helped him land the Dodgers job. "It took me three interviews to finally get hired; I was competing against 100 hearing applicants!" exclaimed Heredia. He now aims to get promoted to the ticket booth, which provides better pay. "He has a good heart; he is such a strong, hard worker," smiled Rudy Jimenez, his supervisor of security, as he patted Heredia's back. Heredia still works at Staples Center during other days of the week when the Dodgers are not playing home, and after the baseball playoffs end, he will be at Staples Center exclusively until the next baseball season begins. Meanwhile, go Big Blue!



Dodger fans Lorenzo Heredia Jr. (right) with his former CSDR teacher



Elise Whitworth

Santa Ana Unified School District

Utah Business' "30 Women to Watch"

CSDR alumnae Elise was among the thirty of Utah's most dynamic women recognized at the 15th Annual 30 Women to Watch Awards Luncheon and featured in Utah Business magazine's May 2014 issue. "These women span job titles and industries, but they clearly excel in each of their respective professional paths." Utah Business magazine recognizes Elise Whitworth, Managing Partner of Satdaya LLC, <http://www.satdayastudios.com/>, among the few women as "ambitious, talented and hard-working, devoted to improving the state, and a key influencer in her company and community, and who solves complex problems that impact us all. Elise is the managing partner for Satdaya in St. George (Utah). Since the company began, she's taken it from a web development service with a few contractors juggling projects to a full-fledged creative services firm.

"I want to do my part to help women prosper, to create a balance in the industry where men learn that women communicate differently and adapt. I am also very passionate about advocating for ASL. I believe that all deaf children should be taught ASL and have the opportunity to interact with peers using a language they are able to 100 percent understand and not be left out or behind."

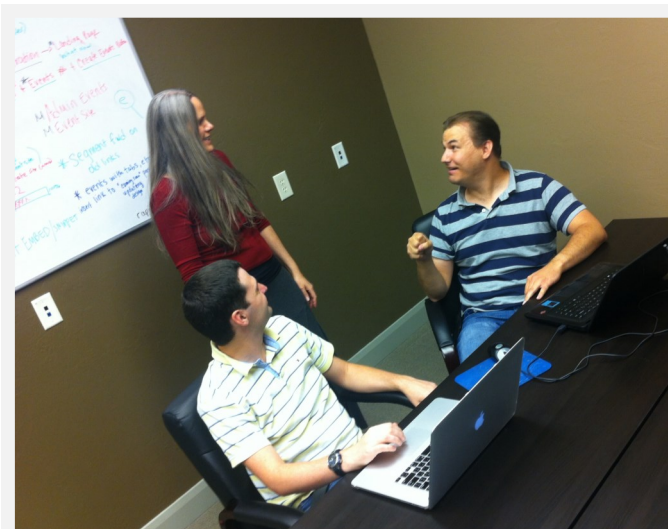
"At CSDR, I benefited from being in an environment where I was in an equal access environment 24/7, communication-wise. It was my first taste of that during my senior year - I remember wishing I had been here to be able to participate in sports and other extracurricular activities throughout my formative years.

"The experience taught me that I didn't always have to be at a disadvantage wherever I am, that I could choose to be in such an environment - or at the very least have a "haven" (the deaf community) to retreat to outside of my work environment.

"I loved, loved, *loved* my photography class - keep in mind, this was before the digital age - I did so well that I got selected alongside Heidi Ramborger by the photography teacher David Thompson to develop photos for the yearbook. It was a big honor.

"It was the first time that I felt special for something other than being smart, which is what I was always told growing up "You're so smart! You need to work harder to reach your potential." *What* potential? I

didn't really get it, what all those teachers were saying to me. For the first time, there was a *real* skill that I could be proud of and was eager to work at. Thanks to Thompson, it was a step toward the career I am now thriving in."



Whitworth discusses strategies with her employees at Satdaya, Inc.

Alexa Ontiveros

Redlands Unified School District

Mother is a Speech Language Pathologist



"I could easily communicate with everyone and I bonded instantly with my deaf friends."

Alexa became deaf as a baby. When they discovered Alexa's hearing level, her parents took sign language classes so they could communicate effectively with their child.

Alexa eventually learned to speak and use sign language simultaneously when talking to her family, who did the same with her. For some years during her childhood, Alexa was enrolled in a speech class at the University of Redlands. Her mother, through experience in this program, decided to become a speech therapist. Alexa is most comfortable using both sign and speech with her family and other hearing people. She is also at ease signing only with her deaf peers and deaf adults.

Alexa has worn hearing aids from around age three to age 12. When she became a student at CSDR in the sixth grade, she wanted to fit in, and chose to stop wearing her aids for a few years. However, she missed listening to music and signing out the lyrics that she heard well with her hearing aids. She donned her aids again last year after having gradually become more confident in herself, and less worried about what others thought. Her grandmother had wanted a cochlear implant for her, but Alexa felt it was too imposing. With the residual hearing she still had, she believes the operation would have been pointless. "I do not want something stuck in my head forever," Alexa confesses. She became so tired of the constant inquiries about getting the implant that she now flatly says "No". Hearing aids are sufficient to meet her needs.



Photos by CSDR TV/Film Students

From age three to the 5th grade, Alexa learned in a small deaf program in a self-contained classroom at a public school. Because she was still physically tiny by the end of fifth grade, she repeated that grade to stay in Elementary school. During that repeated year, she tried for the first time to mainstream into a hearing classroom with an interpreter. She got along well with the teacher and students, who helped her during the days the interpreter was absent. The teacher, who fortunately was familiar with the Deaf community, was also very helpful to Alexa in the public classroom.

Alexa first found out about CSDR through the annual Silent Sleigh parade that the school hosts, where she met a Deaf Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus. Upon originally learning of the “deaf school”, she had thought it was a college for deaf students, and could not wait to attend the school. At that time, she realized the school served younger students, including middle and high school students, and she immediately requested to enroll there.

Alexa feels that the best part about being at a school for the deaf is the ease of communication with everyone, and she has instantly bonded with her deaf friends. This kind of access is what she wants to keep during her college years at Gallaudet University, where she now attends.

At CSDR, Alexa took advanced courses with her deaf peers. She communicated directly with teachers and other students in ASL, written English, and spoken English when applicable. She was also involved in many

school activities. Alexa served on the Associated Student Body Government as Treasurer, handling membership dues, reports, membership drives, monthly student government news, and fundraising. She played on the Girls Softball team, which won the national title last year among all schools for the deaf. Two years in a row, CSDR and other deaf schools across the nation recognized Alexa as “Best Actress” in the school’s student-produced movie as part of the annual Movie Night competition.

During her senior year, the high school student body elected Alexa as their Homecoming Queen, and she rode in the Silent Sleigh parade. Who would have thought that Alexa, who first saw CSDR at this parade as a little girl, would in her final year at CSDR be reigning over the parade as its queen?



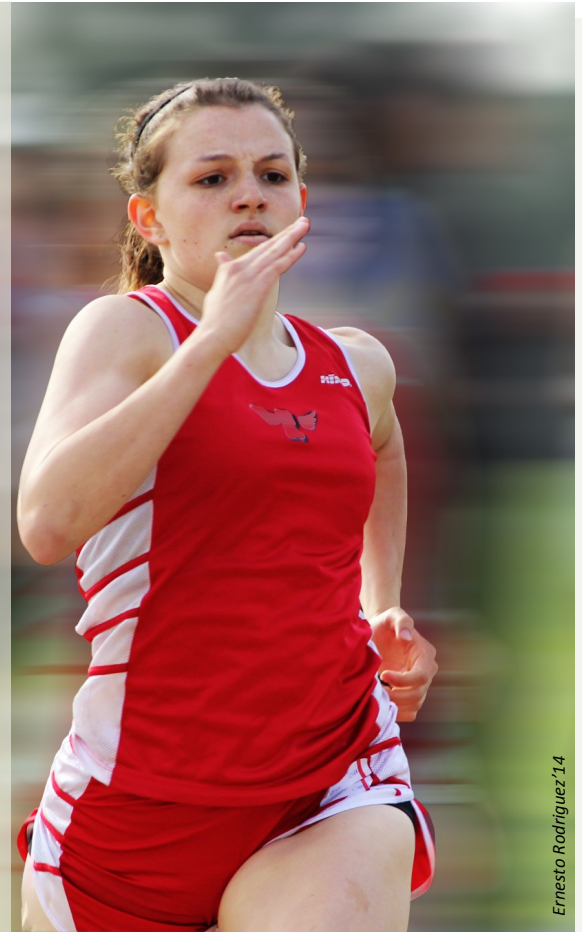
Alana Smith

***Riverside Unified
School District***

***Attended CSDR
her whole life***



***"... a
true
scholar-
athlete
who excels in
academics,
leadership,
and sports.
This ideal
student sets
an example
for others."***



Ernesto Rodriguez '14

Alana is the only deaf member of a family of musicians. Her mother is a singer, her father a drummer, and her older sister an oboist, who blows through her reed to give the sound a vibrating, penetrating voice. Alana wants to be a part of her family and make them proud by learning to dance ballet and to play the piano. As she routinely fingers the keys, she struggles to identify the difference between low and high-pitched sounds. Her parents analyze the quality of music they hear at concerts, but the sounds are generally all the same to Alana who is profoundly deaf and wears hearing aids.

***This school is
like my second
family.***

While she attempts to relate to her family's interest in music, Alana's spirit and passion are in sports and theatre. Whether on the softball or track field, or the basketball or volleyball court, she is a deadly threat to opponents who play against her. Alana's power plays have earned her honors as Most Valuable Player, and have helped her team win games in the CIF league playoffs. Alana also performed on stage as the lead actor in a community musical theatre production of "Nobody's Perfect,"

playing a deaf character who used sign language and spoken English. She truly enjoyed this experience, especially when she taught the other actors and crew about Deaf culture, inspiring them so much that some of them wanted to major in Deaf Studies in college. Alana also stunned the audience as a competent and dazzling mistress of ceremonies at the national Deaf pageant, hosted by CSDR's Jr. NAD student organization. She glows as an ASL singer with the school's spirit song group and in her high school Drama productions. Many would agree that Alana's vibrant voice flows through in her body language, her facial expressions, and through her hands, visibly just as rich as the sounds from her sister's oboe.

In addition to sports and performance activities, Alana is a gifted and earnest learner at the California School for the Deaf in Riverside, where she has attended since she was two years old. As if her additional activities as a class officer, a member of Jr.NAD, and part of the student body government were not enough, she excels in academics with a 4.0 GPA in her honors and AP courses. She passed the state high school exit exam on her first try. Alana reads a lot and admits that her studies in speech, in addition to ASL, have had some influence on her literacy skills. Her specialty in math has also enhanced her team's success in the Deaf Academic Bowl, where they competed against the finalists from other schools and programs for deaf students in the nation. She also enjoyed her 8th grade trip to Rochester Institute of Technology, which houses the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, where her CSDR team competed in the national "Math Counts" tournament. Her love of mathematics and technology has her thinking of attending this university in New York, or Gallaudet University, to major in engineering or business. Alana says, "I want to make an impact on the world. I know I am meant to do something important."

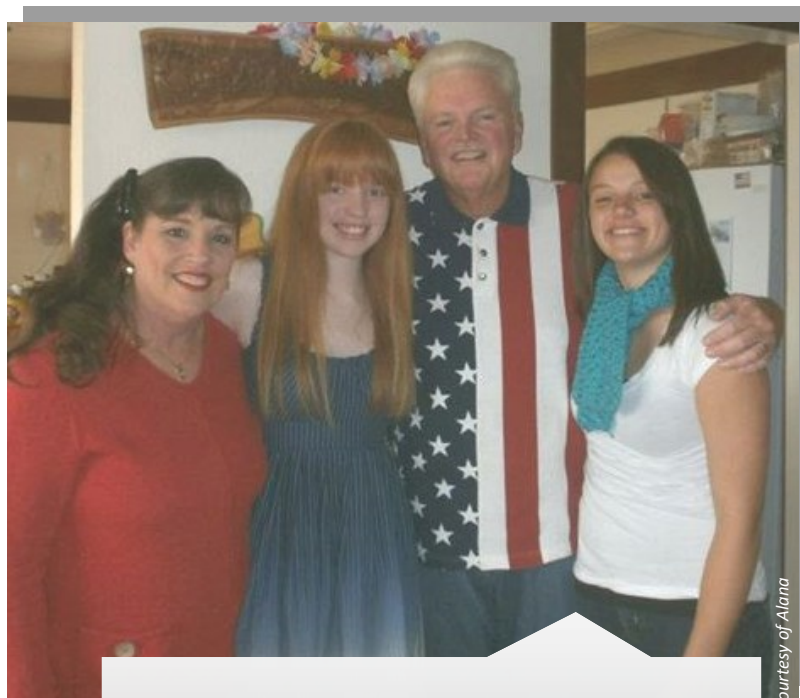
CSDR high school principal described Alana as he presented the Top HS Pupil award to her onstage in front of 425 students as, "A true scholar-athlete who excels in academics, leadership, and sports. This ideal student sets an example for others." Alana credits her success to her school and to everyone she has known here.

"Everyone gave me opportunities to go out and see the world more, and to open my eyes to both cultures of the hearing and the Deaf. They taught me how to cope with the

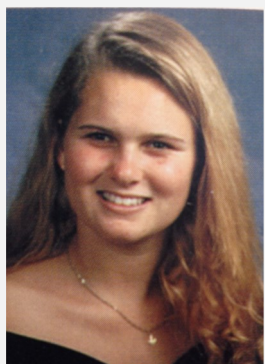
hearing world, and to learn from other people's mistakes. CSDR is like my second family."

Although Alana's immediate family uses sign language with her, she wishes her relatives would also learn her language. She would love them to be a greater part of her life and be able to see what kind of lively and successful personality Alana truly is when she is expressing herself through ASL. It has been somewhat hard on Alana that her older sister has moved out to attend college. Her sister has been her best and most communicative link to her relatives at family events. "If everybody signed, we would be made into one big, even happier family," Alana said wistfully.

While Alana's parents sign to their daughter, she responds back through speech because she wants them to understand her. They struggle in "reading" sign language, as they have not had enough practice in doing so. This arrangement is "do-able", but sometimes Alana feels uncomfortable when she gets sick, has a sore throat, or is not in the mood to speak. She regrets that she cannot talk to her own parents with ease. "It gets harder as my parents get older," Alana admits. "My mom feels bad, but I tell her she's a good mom," who has tried to do what she thought was best. Like the title of Alana's play, "Nobody's Perfect".



The whole family learned sign language to communicate with Alana (right)



Amy "aj" and Andy Granda

Carlsbad Unified School District

Thriving DeafBlind siblings



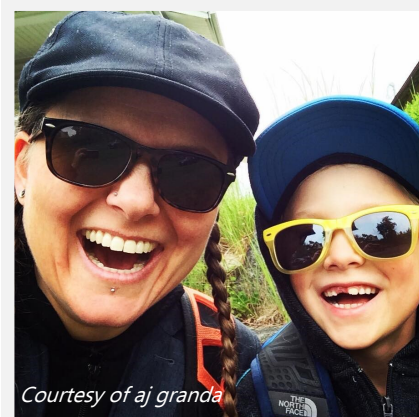
aj granda (who uses lowercase letters for her name) leaves unique, lasting impressions on anybody who meets this uncanny, and explosively remarkable individual. aj is a DeafBlind actor, poet, textiles artist, budding anthropologist, and a mom. Her business, BlindBlueWorld makes one of a kind, made-to-order "monster" shoulder bags and cloth wallets. granda is also a leader in the DeafBlind world.

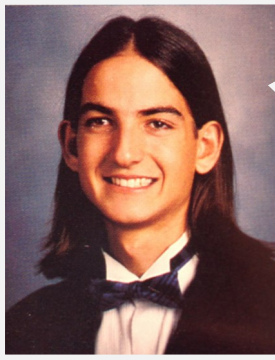
granda, who grew up in Carlsbad, San Diego, has hearing parents and is the oldest of five children, including brother Andy who is also DeafBlind. Both aj and Andy grew up Deaf and became DeafBlind later. The mother, after the birth of her two Deaf children, became an ASL interpreter for a local mainstreaming program. aj later transferred to the California School for the Deaf for her high school years. At CSDR, aj participated in activities including TV "Newsign", Computer Club, Class Office, 'Miss CSDR' Pageant, and was voted as Mrs. Einstein of 2000 for the yearbook. She attended college at Gallaudet University and the Rochester Institute of Technology. At RIT, aj studied Russian Sign Language for one year and served as an intern for a long-term trip in Russia interpreting between ASL and RSL.

After RIT, she studied holistic medicine in New Mexico, and uses her knowledge to mentor others in healthy living. granda has served in various capacities, including professional ASL master at the Deaf West Theatre in Los Angeles, working with Deaf theatrical legends. She now works at The Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc. in Seattle, as a DeafBlind educator and retreat coordinator of the internationally acclaimed annual DeafBlind camp, and as a mentor to DeafBlind youth and a trainer for interpreters and community members who work with DeafBlind people.

With her DeafBlind colleague, Jelica Nuccio, granda has developed a national curriculum to educate the public about DeafBlind people. granda is also the co-founder of the Pro-Tactile "PT" movement. PT is a method and socio-cultural philosophy in which everyone is encouraged to adopt tactile sign language, non-verbal cues, and cultural sensitivity. PT promotes equality and respect toward DeafBlind people. An example of a pro-tactile gesture is to slightly tap on the communicator's arm (or lap when sitting next to each other) as the accessible equivalent to the nodding of the head to say "Yes!", "I agree", "I remember!", or even "HA HA!". Pro-tactile has surfaced only recently after some DeafBlind people freed themselves from oppression by the mainstream who presume to know what is best for others. People like aj granda are leaders in the DeafBlind community, trailblazing the new philosophy. To view granda's educational videos on Pro-tactile and how to interact with DeafBlind people, follow videos at www.protactile.org. granda has traveled widely to share her work at conferences for interpreters, support providers, or educators who work with DeafBlind children and adults. Her team recently presented at Gallaudet University, and featured in the Spring 2014 issue of *Gallaudet Today*. Her topics covered Advocacy, Community Development, Reaching Out to DeafBlind Individuals, and Building Bridges Between the communities.

Left: aj granda and Jelica Nuccio in a v-log demonstrating tactile communication
Right: aj granda with her son Sawyer





For the first time, I realize I didn't really know everything. Peers and staff challenged me, and I realize how much I had yet to learn.

Andy Granda, a CSDR alumnus proudly calls himself "DeafBlind Stoker". Andy graduated as Salutatorian from the Cali-



fornia School for the Deaf – Riverside. Like his older sister, Andy is DeafBlind. He enjoys recreational and competitive cycling, and is involved with the San Diego Center for the Blind where he learned Braille and ways of life as a blind person.

When Andy came to the California School for the Deaf for high school, he experienced personal growth. "For the first time, I realize I didn't really know everything. Peers and staff challenged me, and I realize how much I had yet to learn." The friends he made here became lifelong friends. Andy participated in JV Basketball, Cross Country, Associated Student Body, Close Up, and Computer Club. He also served as a Class Officer, Dorm Officer, Mid-Winter Ball Prince, Newsign Editor, and Yearbook Editor-in-Chief. Andy, in his Salutatorian speech, said "I was lucky my whole family signs. I was never deprived of communication at home, but I needed to learn more about people my own age (at CSDR) and to learn about myself. Thanks to my friends for backing me up during hard times and who provided comic relief. Thanks to my teachers who have helped me grow academically and have challenged and enabled me to grow and to become all I wanted to be."

As an adult, Andy Granda is known among the triathlon community as the first DeafBlind man to finish an IRONMAN competition. "Yeah I was really shocked I was able to get through the whole thing honestly, it was a struggle," said Granda. He has also recently participated for the second time



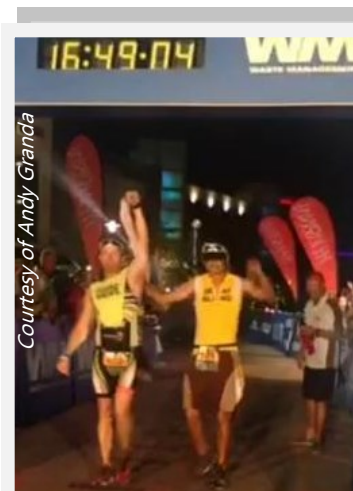
Courtesy of Andy Granda

Andy Granda cycling with hearing girlfriend Sabine

in a fundraising event hosted by Challenged Athletes Foundation (CAF) that will create more opportunities for physically challenged athletes. The 'Million Dollar Challenge' in which Granda participated two years ago along with his group of around 100 cyclists raised more than 1.2 million dollars. "It was a life changing experience for me", says Granda. MDC is a seven-day 620 mile event where 100 cyclists rounded up in San Francisco and rode down the coast to San Diego to represent CAF. This year, Granda rode with Sabine, his girlfriend. Sabine had been active with the Blind Stokers club (www.blindstokersclub.org) as one of the sighted cyclists, and eventually became fluent in ASL after meeting Andy.

Granda will continue training for future athletic fundraiser events. When he's not training for a triathlon, Granda is busy raising money for physically challenged children.

"I really want to race. It's a lot of fun and I didn't realize it was going to end up inspiring people, so I really feel honored by that and it motivates me to inspire more people in the future," Granda said.



Courtesy of Andy Granda

Granda, a physically fit IRONMAN competitor and triathlon athlete



Courtesy of Andy Granda



Tyler Berdy Riverside Unified School District

***Language foundation from family
and CSDR since age three***

***After solid development in ASL at CSDR, my
English took off as my second, equally fluent
language when I began mainstreaming.***

Tyler, a young adult who listens to blasting rock music and plays competitive golf, has a mother who is an executive assistant for a film production, a father who manages the Auto-CAD department, a microcomputer design software program, for an engineering firm in Orange County, and an older brother who works as a well-known actor in L.A. The Berdy family appears to be the typical American family, with one exception. Everybody is Deaf. They communicate using American Sign Language with one another, using written and spoken English as needed with hearing people.

When Tyler was a child, he starred in “The Legend of Mountain Man” by Mark Wood’s ASL Films, acting along with his family. He played an adorable little boy who first saw ‘Bigfoot’, and was the only character who personally interacted with it. In a twisted turn of events, ‘Bigfoot’ carries the boy’s unconscious body across the mountain. Throughout their journey, the boy and the monster develop a heartwarming, playful banter and understanding with each other, which finally help his family accept the existence and good intentions of the creature at the end. Looking back to this movie production, Tyler feels honored to have worked with such Deaf



Tyler (bottom right) in the film acting as a little boy abducted by Bigfoot

acting legends as Howie Seago, Freda Norman, film director Mark Wood, and the late De'VIA artist, Chuck Baird.

HEARING / LANGUAGE

Tyler was born profoundly deaf. He has worn his hearing aids since he was six months old. He can hear people signaling him. When he lipreads without aids, he finds it requires too much effort. His hearing aids help him match the sounds to the lips he watches. He hears the lyrics in songs that, as a lover of music, he craves every day. Tyler calls music his therapy, and adds, "I'm still thinking about last night's production of 'Grease.' I truly enjoyed such an amazing show and the great music!" Tyler uses spoken English for casual conversations. He is not fond of writing back and forth, especially if he is able to speak and lipread well. His good oral skills are due to his Deaf parents' insistence on private speech therapy that began before his first birthday, starting out as simple babbling exercises. Therapy continued at school in two brief sessions a week on campus as requested by his parents at his annual IEP meetings. Tyler was at first reluctant about taking up speech, but now is thankful to his mom for preparing him for "the hearing world". His mother explained that she gave them opportunities to talk and practice in playful, relaxed settings. "If I saw that the child did not do well, I would not force speech upon him. It just turned out that my boys took to it well when learning speech," Tyler's mother said. Tyler recalls that it helped to see his Deaf father using his voice and lipreading with the other engineers, on the occasional days he took the boys to his workplace. "I watched how Dad talked with hundreds of employees. That stuck with me as I realized the importance of speech with others." Tyler chose to stop speech therapy during his early teen years, because he had acquired enough skills for his daily use. If he ever needs further reinforcement or should his skills ever decline someday, he would not mind resuming sessions as needed. However, if instruction or conversation ever occurs in a whole group of hearing people, or if the infor-

mation is vital, as for academics, Tyler expects to have an ASL interpreter.

SCHOOL

From age three to the fourth grade, Tyler attended the California School for the Deaf in Riverside, where he learned through sign language and written English. He had full access to academic information and social interactions with peers while he continued his twice-weekly speech sessions.

"I can speak and lipread, but if I'm in a group of hearing people, or the information is important, I expect to have an interpreter."
- Tyler

Tyler was doing well, so the family experimented the next year with his attendance in the mornings at a local public elementary school a few blocks away. Later in the day he attended the school for the Deaf where he could play after-school sports as a student. Though Tyler's family was deaf, exposure to hearing peers and the spoken English environment was not new to him because his parents created intentional opportunities for interaction in the hearing world. For instance, his father had always expected Tyler to order food for himself at restaurants. Tyler was, nevertheless, new to the large class size, the many hearing friends, and being so close to home. This transitional experience helped Tyler make his own decision to attend the local public school full-time the following year as a sixth grader. After solid development in his na-

tive language of ASL, Tyler's English grammar and writing became his second, but equally fluent language in his public English classroom, where he also had access to a full-time ASL interpreter.

During the last years of high school, Tyler attended a public high school that had a good golf program. Tyler had been happily consumed with golf, playing on the high school golf team. During golf instruction, Tyler used his voice and lipreading skills in one-on-one conversations. During school, Tyler trained in the afternoons with the prestigious Hank Haney International Junior Golf Academy. He continued his studies in the mornings as a transfer student at the Heritage Academy. To help pay for golf tuition, the California Deaf community rallied together at several game fundraiser events

to support Tyler's dream.

After experiencing both education settings at mainstreaming and deaf schools, Tyler has grown into a well-balanced, competent bilingual young man with ASL verbal skills, spoken English functionality for casual and social settings, and written English skills for academics.



GOALS

Tyler wants to be an engineer like his father, in the biomedical field. He has enjoyed his biology and earth space science courses. He became fascinated with surgery and technology, after meeting a deaf biomedical engineer who commuted daily on the train with his father. He is interested in coming up with more efficient technology to alleviate the trauma and risks of surgery. Tyler is currently attending the Arizona State University for its golf program, services for deaf students, and strong focus on the science and technology major, including an Engineering student housing unit with specialized tutoring. "Research lists Biomedical Engineering as the second best job on earth," says the eager, future Dr. Berdy.

***Be involved in both
the hearing and Deaf
worlds; that will
lead to more
success.***

ADVICE

Tyler advises other deaf children to be involved in both the hearing and Deaf worlds; "That will lead to more success. They will have better job opportunities and know how to deal with hearing people and deaf people. If I never had the experience with both hearing and Deaf people, I never could have thought of pursuing my dream in biomedical engineering."